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Eleanor T. Glueck

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TOWARD FURTHER IMPROVING THE IDENTIFICATION OF DELINQUENTS

ELEANOR T. GLUECK*

In "Toward Improving the Identification of Delinquents," an article which appeared in the June, 1962, issue of the *Journal*,¹ the writer described a method of reducing false-positive identifications of potential delinquents and nondelinquents screened by the Glueck Social Prediction Table initially published in *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*.² The original table was composed of five factors: *affection of mother for boy*, *affection of father for boy*, *supervision of boy by mother*, *discipline of boy by father*, and *family cohesiveness*. Subsequent abbreviations of the table resulted in four-, three- and two-factor tables.³ These shortened tables were necessitated by difficulties experienced by various scorers in rating certain of the original five factors, notably *affection of mother for boy*, *affection of father for boy*, and *discipline of boy by father*, in situations in which the father had not been an integral part of the family group. As the coefficients of correlation between the original and the abbreviated tables on the same cases ranged from .932 for a two-factor table to .987 for a four-factor table, there was clearly no loss in rating efficiency:

"Therefore, in instances in which the five-factor table could not be used, an appropriate abbreviated table could be substituted. For example, the inconsistent ratings of *affection of mother for boy* or *affection of father for boy* by workers of differing psychological 'persuasions' were eliminated by confining the scoring to the three remaining factors: *supervision of boy by mother*, *discipline of boy by father*, and *family cohesiveness*. The difficulty of rating *discipline of boy by father* in a situation in which the father had not been an integral part of the family group was met by use of a two-factor table (*supervision of boy by mother*, *family cohesiveness*).⁴

* Dr. Glueck is Research Associate in Criminology at the Harvard Law School. She is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a Trustee of the Judge Baker Guidance Center.

¹ 53 J. CRIM. L., C. & P.S. 164 (1962).

² S. & E. GLUECK, *UNRAVELING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY*, Table XX-3, at 262 (1950).

³ See S. & E. GLUECK, *PREDICTING DELINQUENCY AND CRIME*, app. B, Tables IX-1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, and 1e, at 234-35 (1959).

⁴ *Supra* note 1, at 166.

It is unnecessary at this point to detail the further steps taken to reduce false identifications of delinquents and nondelinquents beyond pointing out that these steps consisted essentially of isolating that group of boys having about an even chance of becoming delinquents or remaining nondelinquents.⁵ Subsidiary screening devices were then constructed to be applied to this as yet ambiguous group of boys. These subsidiary tables were based on discriminatory social factors other than the ones already utilized in the initial five-factor table.

Although the boys of *Unraveling* having an even chance of delinquency were thereby reduced from 300 to 177, the problem remained of further reducing this unclear group. As no additional discriminatory social factors could be found, five personality traits comprising a prediction table published in *Unraveling*⁶ were applied to the still ambiguous group of cases. The five traits are *adventurousness*, *extroversion in action*, *suggestibility*, *stubbornness*, and *emotional instability*.⁷

Application of this table reduced the ambiguous category to 44 cases, or 5% of the 890 cases on which the original prediction table was constructed. No attempt was made to reduce the number still further, but the writer suggested that this could no doubt be accomplished:

"I have no doubt that further refinement of the table, if supplemented by intensive clinical examination focused on locating brain damage, prepsychoticism, feeble-mindedness, and other pathologic conditions that might aid in prognosis, and by inquiries concerning the impact of neighborhood influences upon youngsters, would make possible the more specific identification

⁵ These steps are described in *Toward Improving the Identification of Delinquents*, *supra* note 1, at 166-68.

⁶ *Op. cit. supra* note 2, Table XX-12, at 266.

⁷ Definitions: *Adventurousness*—has impulse for change, excitement, or risk. *Extroversion in action*—gives free expression to feelings in activity. *Suggestibility*—swayed by appeal to feelings even though against better judgment. *Stubbornness*—resistive or persistent, but not in a freely expressed drive; probably the result of thwarted dynamic qualities. *Emotional instability*—unharmonious and inappropriate feeling reaction, conflict of feeling tendencies; not to be confused with lability of emotion.

TABLE IV-A

IDENTIFICATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ON THE BASIS OF THE NEWEST CLUSTER OF THREE FACTORS OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND*

(Coefficient of correlation between the total five factor scores for each boy and the three-factor table is .903)

Chance of Delinquency (Score Class)	Delinquency Rate	Nondelinquency Rate	Total Number of Cases
Low Chance (Less than 140).....	8.6%	91.4%	395
About Even Chance (140-200).....	58.2	41.8	194
High Chance (200 and Over).....	89.0	11.0	390

Predictive Factors**	Delinquency Scores
SUPERVISION OF BOY BY MOTHER	
Suitable.....	9.9
Fair.....	57.5
Unsuitable.....	83.2
DISCIPLINE OF BOY BY MOTHER	
Firm but kindly.....	6.1
Erratic.....	62.3
Overstrict.....	73.3
Lax.....	82.9
COHESIVENESS OF FAMILY	
Marked.....	20.6
Some.....	61.3
None.....	96.9

The statistical work has been handled by Rose W. Knezek, formerly Director of Research Services, United Research Inc., Cambridge, Mass.

* Data for the cluster of three factors were available for 979 cases of *Unraveling*.

** Definitions:

SUPERVISION OF BOY BY MOTHER: *suitable*, if she personally keeps close watch over boy's activities at home or in the neighborhood, or provides for his leisure hours in clubs or playgrounds (if for good reason she is unable to supervise boy's activities, she makes provision for a responsible adult to do so); *fair*, if mother (although not working and not incapacitated) gives or provides only limited supervision to boy; *unsuitable*, if mother leaves boy to his own devices, without guidance, or in the care of an irresponsible person.

DISCIPLINE OF BOY BY MOTHER: (refers to usual or typical discipline of the boy on the part of mother or surrogate); *lax*, if mother is negligent, indifferent, allows boy to do as he likes; *overstrict*, if mother is harsh, unreasoning, demanding obedience through fear; *erratic*, if mother vacillates between strictness and laxity, is not consistent in control; *firm but kindly*, if her discipline is based on sound reason which the child understands and accepts as fair.

COHESIVENESS OF FAMILY: *Marked:* There is a strong "we" feeling among members of the immediate family as evidenced by cooperativeness, group interests, pride in the home, affection for each other. *Marked cohesiveness* can exist even though the father or father substitute is not a part of the family group. *Some:* Even if the family group may not be entirely intact (because of absence of one or more members), the remaining group has at least some of the char-

acteristics of the cohesive family. *None:* Home is just a place to "hang your hat"; self-interest of the members exceeds group interest.

even of this small group of boys as probable delinquents or nondelinquents."⁸
In the course of this experimentation with possible subsidiary tables, it was discovered that a three-factor table consisting of *supervision of boy by mother*, *discipline of boy by mother*, and *rearing by parent substitute*⁹ immediately placed 236 boys out of 981 for whom all the data were available into the group having about an even chance of delinquency, and that the application to them in turn of the prediction table comprised of five personality traits further reduced this group of uncertain cases to 64 or 6% of cases. In other words, the desired result was accomplished in *one step beyond the initial prediction table* rather than the two stages described in Tables I-C and I-D of "Toward Improving the Identification of Delinquents." The writer therefore suggested that

"An experiment in applying this new table, as related to the subsequent behavior of youngsters predicted as delinquents or as nondelinquents, is necessary in order to contrast the results with those derived by the original Social Prediction Table."¹⁰

The New York City Youth Board, which since 1952 has been conducting a study applying the Social Prediction Table and its modifications to 5½-6 year old boys, undertook to experiment with the new three-factor table. The Board has recently reported to the writer, concerning this table, that the factor *rearing by parent substitute*, although theoretically discriminative of delinquents and nondelinquents, does not in reality play a significant role in the predictive cluster, because relatively few children fall into this category. The writer therefore has experimented with replacing the factor *rearing by parent substitute* with *family cohesiveness*, which had been included not only in the original five-factor table but in all the abbreviated versions of that table.¹¹ This has resulted in the construction of Table IV-A (numbered in this way as it follows the last series of tables in "Toward Improving the Identification of Delinquents").

It is to be noted that this table immediately reduces the number of ambiguous cases (that is, those having about an even chance of delinquency)

acteristics of the cohesive family. *None:* Home is just a place to "hang your hat"; self-interest of the members exceeds group interest.

⁸ *Supra* note 1, at 168.

⁹ *Id.* Table III-A, at 169.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 170.

¹¹ See Tables cited *supra* note 3.

to 194, or 19% of the 979 cases involved. At this stage a reduction of this small proportion was further accomplished by applying to this group (actually to 185 of the 194 cases) the five personality traits comprising the predictive device already described above. This step reduced the number of unplaced cases to 56, or 5% of the total number of cases.

Both the New York City Youth Board and the Commissioners' Youth Council of Washington, D. C., in its Maximum Benefits Project,¹² have made experimental use of this latest discriminatory device for the identification of delinquents—the Board, with a population of 5½–6 year olds just entering school, and the Maximum Benefits Project, with older children already evidencing signs of delinquent-like conduct in school. Both groups have prepared interim reports of their projects;

¹² For a brief description of these projects, see E. T. Glueck, *Efforts To Identify Delinquents*, 24 Fed. Prob. 49 (June 1960).

that of the New York City Youth Board will appear in the July, 1963, issue of *Crime and Delinquency*, under the authorship of Maude Craig and Selma J. Glick, and that of the Maximum Benefits Project has recently been presented in a paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in St. Louis, under the authorship of Emory F. Hodges, Jr., M.D., Nina B. Trevvett, and C. Downing Tait, Jr., M.D. The results in both instances are more than promising, and it looks very much as if the newest three-factor table can now be recommended for general use.

The Youth Board experimenters are preparing a small manual of instructions for those wishing to utilize the prediction device. This is bound to stimulate employment of the newest and most effective of our prediction tables for the early identification of delinquents. The writer and Professor Sheldon Glueck will appreciate reports of any applications of this table.